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FLOOR DEBATE

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about the placement decisions being made. The existing fragmentation of policy and implementation can only be corrected if the group making policy is responsible for policy implementation. So we have several reasons why the department is not ready to go to this gatekeeper piece at this point in time. First of all, we don't have an organization that's going to work well for that set in place. Second, we have not developed fully a system that people have confidence in for assessment and evaluation of where kids should be placed. They need the oversight of the court to be able to bring all the parties together, to have confidence and comfort with that, and they need to be able to bring people to the table, including the parents and the youth and the other parties involved in the case of the child, to get the buy-in to that placement so people are supporting that placement. And we don't have the array of services, the continuum of care that we need in place to do this effectively. We don't have that in place. We need to take the time and see...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR THOMPSON: ...how we can implement this more effectively. I believe this amendment, deferring this review to this group that's already in place, that were appointed by the Governor and appointed by the Legislature--Senator Aguilar, Senator Jensen and I were appointed by the Exec Board--it's chaired by Karen Authier, who is the policy director of Boys Town, and it has people evenly divided from all three congressional districts who are leaders in juvenile justice issues. We need to take the time to think this through. I am very concerned that we're going to take action without having...

SENATOR CUDABACK: Time.

SENATOR THOMPSON: ...the proper steps in place.

SENATOR CUDABACK: You've heard the opening on AM1524 to LB 598. Senator Suttle, on that amendment.

SENATOR SUTTLE: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, I'm...I'm concerned and do support the amendment.